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Senate Panel Reverses Itself, Deletes CIA Budget From Intelligence Report

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WASHINGTON—Heeding a last-minute appeal from CIA Director George Bush, the Senate Intelligence Committee Monday reversed its decision to reveal the nation's espionage budget.

As a result of the 6-5 vote, the committee issued its 651-page report with blank spaces where it had intended to show the multibillion-dollar cost of the CIA and other intelligence agencies.

The action seemed to indicate an increasing reluctance on Capitol Hill to reveal additional information about the intelligence community. The same committee last summer brushed aside a personal appeal from President Ford to suppress its report on political assassination attempts.

The decision was the most significant victory for the White House and the CIA in their efforts to keep the lid on disclosures since the House voted last February to refuse to release the final report of its Intelligence Committee.

The House decision was frustrated when the report was leaked to a New York weekly newspaper, the Village Voice, which published virtually the full text of that report.

Ford and Bush have argued vehemently against releasing any information about the cost of U.S. spying, although all other government agencies must show in detail how they propose to spend the taxpayers' money.

The intelligence budget is hidden in appropriations for other agencies. An appropriations subcommittee in each house of Congress is informed about intelligence spending but the information is withheld from other members of Congress as well as from the public.

The Senate committee voted last month to issue a total figure for the cost of the CIA, the Defense Intelligence

The House Intelligence Committee report put total intelligence spending at \$10 billion a year. But intelligence sources have said this figure was inaccurate.

The Senate committee's report contained 16 pages of arguments intended to support the earlier decision to release the figure. It said that release of the total was necessary to permit Congress "to establish its priorities by placing the amount appropriated for national intelligence activities against other claims on the public purse."

Before the report was sent to the printers, the committee agreed to Administration requests to suppress chapters on cover, espionage and budgetary supervision. In addition, the lawmakers agreed to make several changes in the wording of other sections.

The Senate committee avoided many of the confrontations with the White House and the CIA that marked the stormy investigation by the House Intelligence Committee headed by Rep. Otis G. Pike (D-N.Y.).

As a result, the Church committee received some classified information that was withheld from the Pike committee. But the Senate committee complained that its access to secret files was far from complete.

"Despite its legal Senate mandate, and the issuance of subpoenas, in no instance has the committee been able to examine the (various intelligence) agencies' files on its own," the report said. "In all agencies . . . documents and evidence have been presented through the filter of the agency itself."

Some critics have accused the committee of being too willing to accept at face value the assertions of the CIA that past abuses have been corrected. However, committee members concede privately that there is more pressure coming from friends of the intelligence community to block additional disclosures.

Sen. Philip A. Hart (D-Mich.), who voted with the committee's five Republicans against immediate release of the budget figure, explained that he was concerned about a possible backlash.

The financial picture of the CIA is made even more cloudy by the use of "proprietarys," supposedly private business corporations that are actually owned by the CIA. There are two major classes of proprietary: companies that provide services to the intelligence community and firms that provide cover for CIA agents.

The CIA tries to keep secret the names of its proprietary even though their profits, if any, may be used by the

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Agency, the National Security Agency, military intelligence services and other intelligence programs. It did not plan to reveal details.

But Bush argued that even the total figure could tell the Soviet Union and other countries about U.S. spying capabilities. Bush renewed his argument during a closed-door session with the committee shortly before copies of the report were distributed.

Sen. Frank Church (D-Ida.), chairman of the panel, said that the committee decided to leave the final decision to the full Senate, which is considered more receptive to the secrecy pleas of the Administration than the committee.

The Senate has approved the hidden intelligence budget every year since 1947 without even taking a vote on whether the total should be made public. The House rejected by a 267-146 vote last October an effort to release the total figure.

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